

RESPONSE

Applicant notes with appreciation the allowability of claims numbered 32 and 33 by the Examiner. Those claims have been rewritten in independent form incorporating all of the limitations of the independent claim from which they formerly depended. Accordingly, Applicant submits that those claims are now in condition for allowance.

The remaining claims have been canceled without prejudice. They have been canceled in order to obtain prompt issuance of the allowed claims.

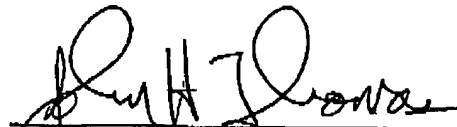
Finally, Applicant notes that it has conformed to the claim numbering order suggested by the Examiner even though the claim numbering does not take into account claims 31-34 that were explicitly added in the Response of Applicant dated March 22, 2001. As indicated earlier, however, all of the claims (including the unrecognized claims 31-34) other than the claims identified as allowable have been canceled.

In view of the foregoing amendments, Applicant submits that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable action is requested hereon.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this response or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-2127.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: May 13, 2004

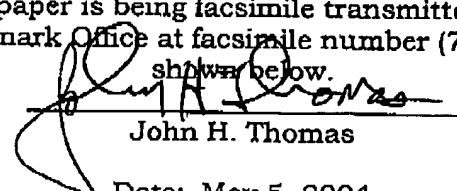

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this paper is being facsimile transmitted to Examiner Minh Trinh at the Patent and Trademark Office at facsimile number (703) 305-3579, on the date shown below.


John H. Thomas

Date: May 5, 2004